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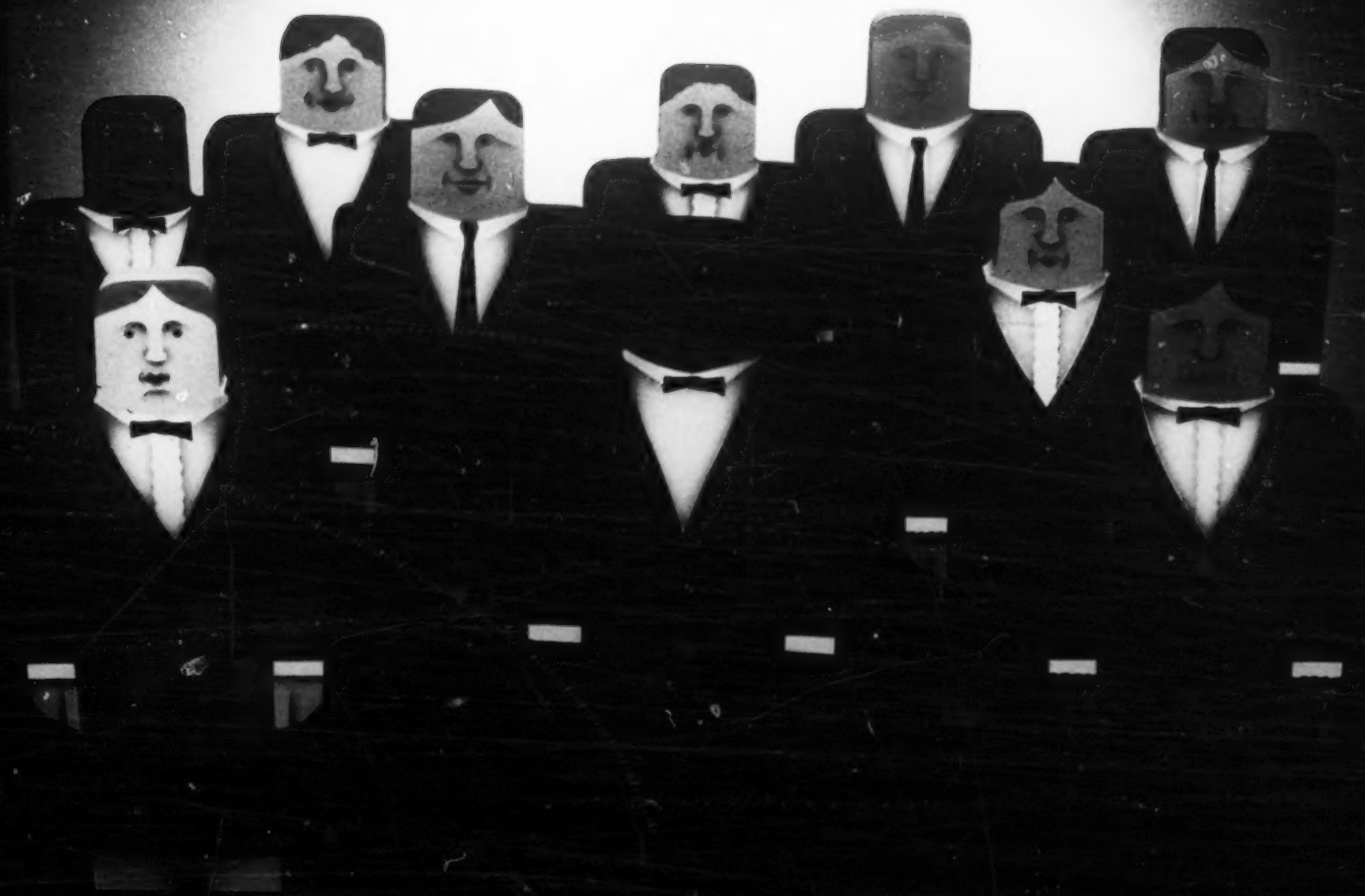

MINORITIES

The Shape of Things to Come

Thinking Like a Brand Manager

PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL

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FEATURES

14 Minorities 2000: The Shape of Things to Come

Minorities continue to be underrepresented in public relations and frustrated about being pigeonholed in jobs in which they communicate with their own minority groups. Now, minority action and proposals by leaders in the field, combined with employers' realization that work force diversity will be one of the major business realities of the next decade, are bringing minority issues into the spotlight. Will this impetus succeed in accelerating change?

Marilyn Kern-Foxworth

24 Thinking Like a Brand Manager

Brand managers are legendary for their determination and single-minded devotion to the product (some call it obsession). Successful marketing public relations professionals must learn to pysche out these key players and fulfill their every need. Two experts provide a game plan.

Joan Aho Ryan, APR and George H. Lemmond

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INSIDE TRACK

A Soviet perspective

Glasnost's breaking out all over. When Nicolai N. Melnikov, vice president of the U.S.S.R.'s Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was in New York to accept a Silver Anvil for the very successful Soviet Trade Exhibition held last December, I spoke with him about future plans for promoting Soviet commerce and about his impressions of public relations as practiced in the United States.

According to Melnikov, trade exhibition plans are ongoing; the goal is to draw more companies to participate—particularly large ones. Whereas the Soviets formerly concentrated on providing foreign companies with general information about business and industry in the U.S.S.R., he said, the emphasis now is decidedly sales-oriented. "We are trying to show concrete results. We are concentrating on showing only products that can actually be sold abroad." Melnikov, whose words were translated by Victor Solodov, assistant vice president of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Trade and Economic Council, noted that some participating Soviet companies may find it necessary to change their products to successfully market them here. "In my opinion," he mused, "even if they fail initially, it could be a good marketing lesson for them."

He seemed pleased to report that, since Soviet law was changed in April to allow 45,000 companies to export directly rather than go through the Soviet Trade Ministry, more than 2,500 companies have registered to do so. Previously, only 200 firms exported, he said. "Now, the second stage, which is crucial to our country, is to prepare marketing specialists to sell in foreign markets. We will need to train and manage our own people and also attract specialists from other countries. In this sphere, public relations and exhibitions are very important."

Melnikov admitted to still being a bit fuzzy on defining public relations, adding that the Soviet government uses many of the same methods used in the United States in areas such as media relations and employee communications. "These are common sense approaches," he said. But, he noted, two experiences in this country, in particular, did give him a "new and refreshing perspective" on the field. "In viewing the winners at the awards dinner, it struck me that public relations is much broader than I'd realized," he said. "The areas dealt with by the winners encompassed everything from water preservation to issues involving retired people. It's clear that, using all of the different methods of public relations, it's possible to get good results in many fields. Now, I want to know much more about public relations."

In addition, he said, he was struck by a definition of public relations offered to him by Jim Dowling, president and CEO of Burson-Marsteller, which handled the exhibition for the Soviets. "He said that the mission of public relations is creating the most favorable atmosphere possible for good business," said Melnikov, smiling and nodding approval.

Karlene Lukovitz, Editor

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The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is an individual membership professional society of 14,265 public relations practitioners. Its major services to members include programs of Professional Development and Accreditation, an Information Center, publications, tracking of issues of national concern, and promotion of ethical practice through adherence to PRSA's "Code of Professional Standards." PRSA's mission is "To serve the public need for understanding and cooperation among its diverse interests by fostering high professional and ethical standards for all those practicing public relations."

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WORKSHOP

Maximizing trade show exposure

Ralph W. McGreevy

The old image of trade shows as being mainly social events is dead and gone. Today, they are recognized as essential components in a balanced marketing program. They exist to facilitate the purchase and sale of goods and services. Budgets hinge on results: expenses must be justified.

Trade show programs and public relations share many common elements. They are both components of the promotional mix and they often share the same messages and act as one of the few, or only, representatives of their organization. Frequently, both seek measurable results. With all this in common, it's hard to believe that public relations and trade show professionals don't interact more often.

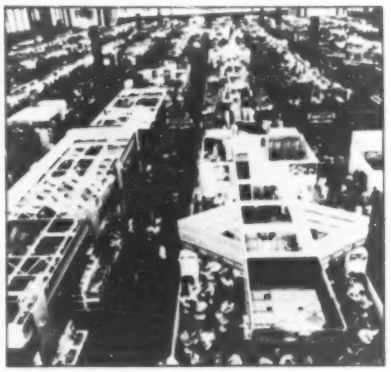
Yet, when I recently moderated a seminar on the subject of public relations and the trade show at "The Exhibitor Show '89," the trade show industry's largest educational conference on trade show marketing, and asked a group of about 50 corporate exhibit managers whether their in-house or firm public relations counsel assisted in either the strategic planning or implementation of their trade show promotions, there was only one positive response.

In progressive organizations, trade show and public relations practitioners should interact whenever possible. It behooves the public relations counsel, either corporate or firm, to initiate the building of administrative and budgetary bridges to link these functions for the benefit of both.

When an industry's suppliers and several hundred or more direct customers meet in the street market environment of a trade show, it presents the savvy public relations practitioner with many unique opportunities. You must understand and appreciate the full extent of the publicity opportunities presented at your company's or client's trade shows.

There are three reasons public relations practitioners should become involved in a trade show program. The astute practitioner can:

- reinforce the company's sales message at the show and enhance immediate show participation;
- extend the publicity windfall associated with show participation via pre- and post-show publicity;
- use the on-site exposure as a high visibility/high interest base to pursue and achieve other public relations goals.



"Stories placed in local and regional media covering a host city can increase booth traffic"

Counseling the team

Although trade shows last only a few days, the coordinated effort of planning the participation and the various promotions should occur at least three to five months prior to show dates. One of the best ways to start is to contact the trade show organizer and review the plans for show promotion. Show management is usually interested in the same audiences you are: attendees and the media. Playing off their efforts can be beneficial.

Once you understand the basic plan of the show organizer, you can devise your own plan. This process should involve many individuals, including: R&D personnel, product and sales managers, the advertising manager, exhibit manager and other public relations counsel. Public relations practitioners, either firm or in-house, might find their presence to be new to the exhibit "team." Nonetheless, their advice should be integral to the coordination of promotional projects surrounding the exhibit, including the formulation of the major messages that will set the promotional tone. Though the vehicles used will vary, the main goal is always to establish a clear image through continuity. To ensure this continuity, three phases of planning are necessary: pre-show, show and post-show.

■ Establish pre-show interest.

The public relations practitioner has a variety of ways to approach the task of trade show publicity. Planned pre-show promotion can help ensure that attendees will be looking for your firm's booth during the show, and creates a foundation for communicating your desired message to attending media.

A series of direct mail pieces will help establish interest among potential attendees and provide the vehicle for communicating any on-site promotions. Many firms build pre-show excitement by offering at-booth giveaways, vacations, product demonstrations, celebrity appearances and other enticements. Promotions should be related to the product or theme being exhibited, and have some news or novelty value.

Familiarizing yourself with key industry trade media is essential during the pre-show stage. Most of the industry's major publications will probably cover the show. Since one story angle will not suit all media, you should develop a variety of angles for different editorial needs.

Contact your media sources well in advance of the show to establish initial relations, and again several times closer to the show. Discuss their needs and search for a fit as it relates to your firm's show participation. In addition, take the time to formalize your invitation to the media.

Trade publications will often save their

trade show material for one pre-show issue. While it can be difficult to fight this trend among editors, you should explore ways that can get your story into print several times prior to that issue. Some suggestions include:

• Offer "exclusive," timely information on your company in advance of the pre-show issue. For example, offer a "new products" exclusive to the key book if you plan on introducing new products or services at the show.

• Discuss the current "hot" issues in your industry and how they will be addressed by your firm. Some examples: your company is sponsoring a guest speaker or seminar on a timely industry topic; one of your firm's personnel is chairing a session; or, your firm will be exhibiting products that offer solutions to industry problems. Emphasize that more information will be available at your booth.

• Create a memorable pre-show promotion that can lay the groundwork for your cause with key editors. As hundreds of pre-show stories begin crossing their desks, a clever direct mail piece may be one element that sets your firm and your story apart.

You're fighting the editor's natural inclination to pigeonhole your story for the pre-show issue, so it's necessary to work twice as hard to communicate its importance and timeliness. By knowing a publication's editorial calendar, and discussing the book's needs with the editor well in advance, you can do much to find the proper fit for your story in a key publication.

■ Use on-site contacts.

At show time, your firm's booth can be one in a sea of hundreds, each with a different story to tell. Your on-site messages must be unique and newsworthy.

Bring a large supply of press kits for the show's press room. Your kit should have material pertinent to the show, such as information on new products and technology introduced at your booth, but don't neglect including your total company (or client) message in your kit.

Stop by the press room periodically, and introduce yourself and the kit to members of the media. One of the biggest advantages to linking public relations with the trade show is the chance to meet editors at the show site. Establishing these personal relationships with editors can assist in gaining placements long after the show ends.

Trade shows are traditionally associated with the introduction of a new or improved product or service. An outstanding product demonstration at your booth might be a great photo opportunity, so consider hiring a photographer and alerting media.

If you have high-interest news to communicate, plan on holding a press conference. Normally, this can take place either at your booth during show hours or off premises. Be aware that most show managements will ask you not to schedule an off-premises event that conflicts with show hours. A breakfast conference is one option.

If you are not introducing a new product, explore other creative ways of beating the drum loudly for your company or client. If an employee is presenting a paper, or chairing a conference, it's possible to position the firm as an expert source of information. You can also directly involve editors or key prospective clients. Some tactics to achieve this:

• Schedule interviews with company personnel. In addition to executives, consider R&D people, product managers and others;

• Create editorial roundtables, chaired by a chief industry leader;

• Provide paid keynote speakers as a feature attraction for an off-site function;

• Formally sponsor coffee breaks, lunches, breakfasts or hospitality suites for editors and key prospects, or informal gatherings, dinners and "nights out" during the show.

When planning your promotions and publicity, don't forget media in the host city and its surrounding region. Studies have shown that a significant number of attendees at a trade show come from the area adjacent to the show site. Stories placed in local and regional media can increase booth traffic.

■ Follow up with contacts.

When the show ends, publicity opportunities don't. Consider submitting to media: photos of your exhibit and displays, rewrites or transcripts of technical papers or speeches given by company personnel and copies of press kits to editors who could not attend. Thank you notes and follow-up calls are always in order, both as a courtesy and to help answer any last-minute questions.

Use media contacts you've established at the show as springboards for longer-term public relations goals. Editors who have shown interest in a new product or service are obviously excellent publicity prospects for future, related introductions.

Cost effectiveness: trade shows vs. sales calls

	Trade shows	Industrial sales call
How many follow-up calls must you make to book an order?	0.8	4.6
How much must you spend to reach a prospect?	$133	$252
How much will it cost to book an order?	334	1,158
What is the cost to book an order from a new customer?	334	1,490

Source: Trade Show Bureau survey of exhibiting companies in 1987; McGraw-Hill Laboratory of Advertising Performance, 1987.

The trade show can offer a significant bottom-line impact—one worthy of a concerted public relations effort.

Factors influencing trade show-related purchases

Production information	% planning to buy
Publication editorial	72
Exhibitors	67
Direct mail	66
Advertisements	66
Guest tickets	65
Friend/associate	56

Source: Survey of 13 expositions in 1988 by Exhibit Surveys, Inc., Red Bank, New Jersey.

Editorial support for a trade show program yields impressive results. Of those attendees who found out about a trade show through editorial coverage, 72 percent were planning to buy one or more of the products exhibited.

Ralph W. McGreevy is general manager of A-B Communications, a marketing communications firm in Hudson, Ohio serving clients in the trade show industry. He is also vice chairman of public relations for the National Association of Exposition Managers.